ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Effects of Growing Season vs. Dormant Season Burns on Vegetation Composition and Small Mammal Diversity on Cooper Farm

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This study recorded the initial, short-term effects of the new growing-season prescribed fire regime on portions of Cooper Farm's tallgrass prairie habitat, as compared to the portions receiving the current regime of dormant-season burns. The goal was to gather data that can be used as a starting point for future investigations of the long-term effects of the new burn regime, specifically the hypothesis that it will alter vegetation composition in such a way as to encourage greater diversity of small mammal species on the property. Analysis of the data gathered approximately one month following the growing-season burns showed that percent cover of both grass and forb species was lower in the growing-season burn sections, while there was no significant difference in small mammal diversity between dormant- and growing-season burn sections. Investigation of the possible spread of the invasive species *Dipsacus fullonum* (common teasel) into the growing-season burn sections compared to the dormant-season sections was inconclusive.